# Collaboration, Innovation & Inclusivity: The Foundation For Bristol Myers Squibb's Creative Approach To Corporate Learning

## Meet Shawn Thomas, Director, IT Business Partner for Enterprise Learning, BMS

Shawn Thomas is the Director, IT Business Partner for Enterprise Learning at BMS, where he is responsible for supporting the organization's training goals with technology. He works with individual teams to understand their needs so he can build and maintain a learning ecosystem that's scalable for the organization.
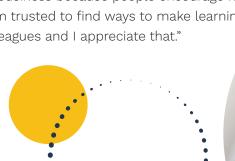
Shawn started out as a math teacher before holding jobs in banking and risk management roles, a tech position at TRW, and even had a brief stint in marketing. "I've reinvented myself a couple of times, and if you've ever read the book *Who Moved My Cheese* by Spencer Johnson, change in life doesn't affect me much," he says.

It's this ability to adapt and understand the needs of the business that have made Shawn so successful at BMS. "We might need to do an assessment and don't have the specific tools in a couple of the platforms we have, so we go find another platform that has those types of questions. Or we have a gap in gamification, which Qstream solves a lot of those problems," Shawn explains. "So it's really kind of working with the business, gathering the requirements and then building out what the enterprise needs as a whole."

He started his career with the organization on the commercial side before moving into his current role, where there was a clear need for his unique skill set and expertise. He also credits the organization's forward-thinking approach. "I've gotten to where I am today in the pharma business because people encourage me to take chances and be innovative. I am trusted to find ways to make learning and development better for my colleagues and I appreciate that."

### About Bristol Myers Squibb

[Bristol Myers Squibb (BMS)](#) is a global biopharmaceutical company whose mission is to discover, develop and deliver innovative medicines that help patients prevail over serious diseases. They've been responsible for significant advancements in oncology, hematology, immunology and cardiovascular disease. With an extensive global footprint, BMS prioritizes inclusivity and believes it's critical to achieve business results.

# A Collaborative, Think-Outside-The-Box Corporate Culture Fuels Creativity

BMS encourages the open sharing of ideas across the organization. "Diversity and inclusion are top priorities for BMS and that really opens people up to being creative, listening to other people's points of view and collaboration," Shawn explains.

He says that he is regularly approached by people throughout the organization with interesting training ideas. "It's really cool to see the innovative ideas that people come up with and the different ways they are using our learning systems."

Still, Shawn and his team must be selective and strategic with their time and energy and understand that throwing training technology at learners and hoping it sticks is not the right approach. They are on the ground talking to learning leaders and most importantly, the people on the frontline using the tools. They learn what's working, what's not, how the systems are being used and best practices that can be circulated with the rest of the organization. "We've had some proof of concepts and some lessons learned, especially with Qstream," Shawn explains. "The fact that we've been able to leverage the flexibility of Qstream in many markets and they all use it a bit differently but they've all been very successful is really a testament to the continuous communication and collaboration that we have with our internal partners."

A few years back, BMS's commercial innovation team, Technology Training Solutions, came up with the idea to create a resource for sales with the look and feel of the Harry Potter newspaper, *The Daily Prophet*. "It took a simple, stagnant document and made it interesting and engaging," Shawn says. They added some GIFS to make it more interactive while still communicating important information about the business. "This tool was highly successful in getting information to sales reps more effectively and efficiently," Shawn continues. "It was an engaging platform that eliminated change management problems in document updates and gave field sales colleagues a singular "truth" for communications and resources."

This organizational culture empowers Shawn to try new things. He knew that when he stepped into his current role, knowledge reinforcement was a must-have in his toolkit. He tells the story of being introduced to Qstream at a conference years ago. "I learned about knowledge reinforcement and pull through and why testing people isn't enough. You have to remind them of the things they need to know."

After the conference, he approached his boss with this idea. "I told him we could move the finish line of learning," he says. "We can transform what we do here by going beyond just having that standard one-and-done class where you get your certificate of completion."

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Today Qstream, which extends learning by reinforcing critical information over time, is an important part of BMS's learning ecosystem. Shawn says that his work with Qstream and Inkling, the digital learning platform that curated the Harry Potter newspaper experience, are two of his proudest achievements at BMS. "It's the sustainability, creativity and flexibility of these applications." He continues, "We basically use Qstream and the engagement of the Inkling application to create continuous learning for our global commercial teams at an enterprise level."

## A Look At BMS's Learning Tech Stack

Ingenuity is the backbone of the organization's learning ecosystem and Shawn and his team enlist the help of multiple creative tools and solutions to engage, train and develop employees.

"Qstream is our standard for pull through and reinforcement programs," he says. "Our LMS is SuccessFactors and for design and development, we use applications like Captivate, Articulate, and simpleshow."

They also tool around with other companies, specifically those that support gamification. "We're dabbling in understanding what the return on investment would be on some augmented virtual mixed reality," he says.

BMS appreciates the ability to easily integrate systems to support automation, harness better data and increase efficiencies across the organization.

"Integrations are really important to me and to a lot of our partners. Whether that's a deep integration or whether you're just flexible enough as a company to be a call-out for a system," Shawn explains.

"I think what's made Qstream really valuable over the years is the tool doesn't have some complicated system and APIs that we can't work with," he says. "It's a flexible application, it can be used many different ways and it can be easily managed and linked to other platforms we use."

## Measuring Training ROI

Tying learning outcomes to business metrics has historically been a struggle but that hasn't stopped BMS from getting creative. "We're taking all of our learning systems and putting them into one area where we can actually do some analysis," says Shawn. "It always sounds easier than it really is because there's always a lot of data privacy issues and stuff around that."

He says that systems like Qstream and SuccessFactors have helped them do so. "We've generated a pretty robust set of data that actually has standard fields," he explains. "So we're looking to take the outcomes and sustainment from those applications and then marry that with some of the other performance data that we have."

They're also incorporating a Microsoft Viva and SharePoint integration for how people work in the flow of business and Glint for real-world feedback to learn what services and applications are at the core of high performance. Shawn continues, "We're really hoping over the next couple of years we can get a lot of interesting feedback about people's behaviors, how they learn and how systems like Qstream are really impacting their performance long term."

## How BMS Is Using Qstream Today

Shawn says they are seeing success using Qstream in a couple different ways across learning programs. "We've given people upfront tests to see what they know before moving into a learning event like a week-long classroom session or a quick, two-day training and then following up to see what the differential was." They then conduct the same assessment a week or so later to see if they retained the key concepts shared.

The Qstream heat maps have been helpful in making correlations. "We found that people that missed a certain training didn't do as well in that area of the follow-up Qstream since you can see exactly how people answered the questions in the analytics."

Assessment-style Qstreams help confirm critical knowledge prior to learners entering the field. "We'll pound out 50 questions for some of our more important tests before they have to go out and sell or do medical work." This approach acts as a safety net so management can correct any knowledge gaps that exist before mistakes are made on the job.

They are also tapping into their creativity around the game mechanics in Qstream, which include team and individual leaderboards. "We have the different parts of the organization and departments compete against one another and award prizes to make it fun and keep people engaged," Shawn says.

In the spirit of collaboration, Shawn welcomes people approaching him with their own ideas for using Qstream, since it means they are finding value in the tool. "We're trying to manipulate it as best we can and use it as broadly as we can across all of our markets," he says.

To empower and inspire learners, he tells them, "Fail every day at Qstream. When you're getting questions wrong, you're learning." This takes the pressure off people so they can truly focus on learning the content.

In Qstream, learners are asked a question, given immediate feedback on their response and then provided an explanation. This sequence is scientifically proven to increase knowledge retention since the brain is primed to take in new information when asked a question. If answered incorrectly, providing immediate feedback and an explanation to back it up helps the learner get it right the next time it's asked.

This thinking has really resonated with learners. "Everybody feels like there's a spotlight on them when they take a test, but now they're like, 'Yeah, this is just part of my learning here at BMS.' And that's the key."

## BMS' 2022 Qstream Results At A Glance

- 15% improvement in topic proficiency
- 56 countries enrolled in training
- 93% engagement for US participants
- 3,437 questions asked
- 13,250 participant enrollments
- Teams trained: Commercial Sales, Medical, Manufacturing Operations
- Trained on subjects such as: Oncology, Hematology, Immunoscience & Leadership Development

## Laying The Groundwork To Fully Embrace Technology Enhancements

What are BMS's priorities as the technology landscape continues to rapidly evolve? "Integrating technology into your company means that all of your systems have to have the same metadata content standards," Shawn explains. "We're trying to tackle a lot of those things and set up those metadata content standards to make ourselves successful in the future."

He adds, "One of the great things about having a single pull through and reinforcement application like Qstream is the metadata, the content, how we do business here and the center of excellence we've set up over the years. I can incorporate that in anything we do across a bunch of different groups, building articulate e-learnings and making sure we're using the same metadata across the systems."

He says working with partners and vendors that are constantly innovating and are transparent about that innovation is an important part of this initiative. "The way Qstream and other companies are constantly improving their products and giving us different ways to do things and keep learners engaged makes a huge difference in training outcomes."

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## Making A Difference Inspires Shawn's Work At BMS

When Shawn speaks about the work he is doing at BMS, you can hear the passion behind his words. "As a learner, growing up and into my college education, I have always kind of hung my hat on the idea that making the difference in the life of one child is a big deal," Shawn explains.

"Watching people grow at BMS, whether it's implementing new technology or getting teams the capabilities they need to improve field work for our medical staff or R&D staff, you just can't beat the feeling you get when people are smiling and happy about what they're doing," he says. "Witnessing moments where I'm making a difference is the most rewarding part of what I do."

## Qstream

Qstream is the leading enterprise microlearning and knowledge reinforcement solution proven by science and in practice to boost learner performance. Hundreds of organizations rely on Qstream to build high-performance teams by delivering a personalized and agile learning experience that delivers the highest levels of retention, engagement and efficiency along with analytics that provide precision insights and expose a real-time view of performance readiness.

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